

Advocacy Is

Advocacy is for anyone.

An advocate is someone who tells a convincing story expressing a personal belief. Regardless of experience or professional training, anyone can be a successful advocate. The most important attribute of an advocate are passion and commitment for a cause or an idea. Successfully communicating that passion is advocacy.

Advocacy is a process that requires perseverance.

Few advocacy campaigns are immediately successful. The target of the campaign must be made aware of the subject and that a problem exists. Only then can they be educated on the issue(s). The legislator also needs to know the solutions being proposed by the advocate and what he or she is being asked to do. This process takes place via a series of contacts over a period of time that can include letter writing, telephoning, e-mailing, and personal visitations during which a relationship of respect develops. The legislator begins to believe in the advocate's cause and is ready to take the action being requested, ideally convincing fellow legislators to become involved as well.

Advocacy is a language.

The manner in which an issue is stated will impact the perception of the recipient. An advocate speaks to the needs of the clients, not the advocate. Speaking as an advocate can be as simple as a therapist requesting new equipment to increase the client's therapeutic benefits rather than phrasing the request in terms of making it easier for the therapist to add new activities to the program. An advocate will state the benefits of services to the facility's patients/clients and how CAT services could coordinate with other therapies to make them more effective rather than requesting that the facility hire a CAT. An advocate would request reimbursement for CAT services to assure the services will be accessible to all in the legislator's district who could benefit but for whom they are not currently affordable rather than asking for reimbursement so CATs can continue in their profession.